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S E R M O N
PREACHED AT
THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH IN NORWICH,
ON THURSDAY AUGUST 21, 1783.
ON OCCASION OF
THE ANNIVERSARY MEETING
OF
THE GOVERNORS
OF THE
NORFOLK AND NORWICH HOSPITAL.

~~BAGOT~~
BY LEWIS, LORD BISHOP OF NORWICH.

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE GOVERNORS,
FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE CHARITY.

N O R W I C H:
PRINTED BY W. CHASE AND COMPANY.

MDCCLXXXIII.

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PREACHED AT

THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH IN NORWICH

ON THURSDAY AUGUST 21, 1852

ON OCCASION OF

THE ANNIVERSARY MEETING



THE GOVERNORS

OF THE

NORFOLK AND NORWICH HOSPITAL

BY LEWIS, LORD BISHOP OF NORWICH

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MCCCLXXIII

TO THE
GOVERNORS
OF THE
NORFOLK AND NORWICH
HOSPITAL,

THIS SERMON,
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IS MOST HUMBLY
INSCRIBED.

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MATT. xxv. 36.

" I WAS SICK AND YE VISITED ME."

SUCH is the tenor of that commendation with which Christ hath promised to receive his faithful Disciples, when he cometh in his own glory, and the glory of his Father, to pronounce finally on the actions of every man that shall have lived upon the earth. A paltry praise, perhaps, in the account of those who seek glory one of another; and make that object the spring and ultimate scope of every thing they do. Men of this description judge hastily. They reason and act too upon false principles; making a wrong estimate of themselves, of their situation in the world, and of every circumstance that can be matter either of present concern, or future expectation. Their erroneous judgement in these respects can only be rectified by one expedient; and that such an one as the bent of their minds will not easily incline to.

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They must submit to forego their own wisdom, (the lessons it hath been the labour and pride of their life to learn) and receive instruction from one who was meek and lowly of heart. Then and then only will they in truth "see with their eyes, and understand with their heart:" The delusions of the world, and of their own hearts, will no longer deceive them; "and they shall be converted, and he will heal them."

THE evils and calamities to which mankind are subject, their mutual wants and weaknesses, and their dependence on each other they could not long be ignorant of. There was no need of a special Revelation from Heaven to inform them in this matter. The lesson must be sufficiently taught by the experience of every hour. Their own passions and propensities too would speak for themselves. Hence we find in the Heathen Moralists, as far as these facts go, strong and lively representations of the state of Man's life as it really is. We find too in their best writers, of almost every sort, such addresses to the tender feelings of humanity, as leave no room to doubt that commiseration is the natural

^a Matt. xi. 29.

^b Matt. xiii. 15. Comp. Is. vi. 10.

natural inmate of the human breast; equally strong (unless overpower'd by violence and acquired habits) in all times and countries; and not the mere creature of refinement and civilization. But to what source to refer those evils which they saw and felt; how to regulate the softer emotions of their mind, so as to form a proper and consistent rule of conduct and promote the common happiness, they knew not. They could in particular instances act charitably and humanely on the impression of the moment; nay sometimes they could not help doing so; when perhaps the impulse of the next moment would urge them with still greater force to gratify a sudden and bitter resentment. So little were they aware that acts of Benevolence were the proper employment of their whole life, and the temper which prompted them the only temper to which an eternity of happiness could be annex'd; the only character by which we can bear a proper resemblance to the Fountain of all good. Even their best Systems of Morality, (tho' particular Duties are traced out with wonderful sagacity and penetration, and supported with great strength of argument,) considered in the whole as applicable to the general government of our lives are wofully deficient. A manifest confusion and inconsistency pervades them which must

be attributed to a want of this principle which weak and disorder'd Reason could not attain to. This was indeed a knowledge too wonderful and excellent for us, 'till it was whispered to the world by a still small voice from Heaven itself; 'till "the Day spring from on high visited us"; and by degrees dispelled the clouds of ignorance and composed the tumults of turbulent and unruly passions. The truth of this observation is remarkably confirmed by comparing the Heathen authors of different periods with each other. The superior excellence of such of them as treated of moral subjects, subsequent to the glorious Epoch abovementioned, is only to be accounted for, from a mixture of that principle of universal benevolence which they borrowed from the Gospel.

THE law of love and charity which enjoins to love our enemies; and to do good to them that persecute and injure us, was in truth as far beyond the investigation of mere human reason, as the doctrine of redemption itself, and the assured hope of mercy and immortality that is grounded upon it. For these purposes it was needful that God's nature and will should (so far as our faculties were capable of such communication) be made known

'Luke i. 78.

known unto men. A law and example were therefore vouchsafed from Heaven; our obedience and imitation called for by the most engaging motives, and gracious means supplied to frame our minds to a temper suited to Heaven and heavenly enjoyments; to a likeness of him who is "Light"^d itself and "Love"^e itself, unmixed purity and unbounded benevolence. Traces of these principles may be found in the Jewish law, so far as it contains the first dawns of better things to come. But we have seen that the generality of that nation, notwithstanding their singular advantages, were of too gross and carnal apprehensions to admit those rays of divine truth. They placed their religion too much in a scrupulous observance of lesser matters, forgetting the great duties of judgement and mercy. The poor cripple at the Pool of Bethesda could not find an hand among them to place him, tho' but a few steps forward, within reach of those means of relief which the bounty of providence had furnished. Thanks be to God, we have not so learned Christ. We are plainly instructed what use to make both of our own misfortunes and of those of other men. The one, at the same time that they are to ourselves strong intimations of God's general displeasure

against

^d I. Joh. i. 5. ^e I. Joh. iv. 8. ' Joh. v. 7.

against sin, with which we are all tainted, are also the proper exercise of our patience, and trials of our submission to his will. The other give occasion to the tenderest emotions of our nature; and call forth into action those blessed dispositions which are the remains of that divine image, wherein (however it be now obscured) we were originally created, and which in their habitual exercise will actually again unite us with God thro' Christ. "For he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and "God in him."

Thus hath been the voice of the Gospel from the very beginning. The character and high office of our blessed Lord; the time and manner of his birth, the nature, circumstances, and ultimate intention of his Death, were all pre-announced in such manner by the old Prophets, as to raise some sort of expectation of those events; and after their accomplishment to afford an irrefragable proof that the whole was the work of God. But as the Christian dispensation was not only to minister pardon and forgiveness to sinners but to abolish sin by leading men to repentance and sanctification; the same Prophets describe the Author and Finisher of our faith, as displaying its genuine spirit in the actions of his life.

To

1. Joh. iv. 16.

To this purpose there is a remarkable passage in the Prophecies of Isaiah ; who from the sublime and spiritual character of his writings is not improperly stiled "the Evangelical Prophet". The discussion of this passage will enable us to vindicate the truth and consistency of God's word ; and lead us at the same time to reflections particularly suited to the present solemnity. "Surely he hath born our griefs and carried our sorrows" saith the Prophet in the terms of our common version. What the amount of this assertion is will appear from taking a view of the whole passage in connection. In doing this I shall take the liberty to use such words as appear to express the sense of the original most clearly ; following for the most part the interpretation of the great and learned Prelate who hath lately thrown much light on this important book.

"He hath no form nor beauty that we should regard him ;

"Nor is his countenance such that we should desire him ;

"Despised and not accounted in the number of men ;

"A man of sorrows and acquainted with pain ;

"As one that hideth his face from us ;

"He was despised and we esteemed him not.

"Surely our sicknesses he hath relieved

"And our sorrows he hath carried them.

"Yet we thought him judicially stricken

"Smitten of God and afflicted.

"Eut

" But he was wounded for our transgressions,
 " Was smitten for our iniquities,
 " And the chastisement of our pacification was upon him,
 " And by his bruises we are healed."

Is. LIII. .2 5.

THE illustrious person here described makes his appearance in a low and humble state; surrounded with afflictions and subject to bodily pains.

THESE circumstances which from generous breasts should have insured him compassion at least, brought on him only contempt and rejection. His own conduct was very different. When he saw any afflicted or diseased, he took part in their sorrows and restored their health. Yet what he himself suffer'd in that kind was looked upon as a mark of the special vengeance of Heaven to shut him out from the converse and pity of Men: when in fact his sufferings (so far as they partook at all of the nature of judicial inflictions) were not for his own iniquities but for ours; and by those sufferings alone can we be intitled to peace and salvation." So precisely doth the Prophet's reasoning stand. Here are two circumstances mentioned plainly, distinct from each other, as aggravations of that contempt which the sorrows and afflictions of Christ brought upon him from mankind:

FIRST,

FIRST, that he himself did not despise those sufferings and afflictions in others, but treated them with compassionate kindness; administering such relief and comfort as they required. SECONDLY, that it was purely for our sakes, and on account of our iniquities that he underwent those sufferings.

ST. MATTHEW, with that unaffected simplicity that best marks the truth, relates certain facts, and appeals to the prophet, in proof that they were such as the promised Messiah was appointed to perform. “ When the
 “ even was come they brought unto him many that
 “ were possessed with devils, and he cast out the spirits
 “ with a word; and healed all that were sick, that it
 “ might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the
 “ prophet, saying, Himself took our *infirmities*, and bare
 “ our *sicknesses*.”^h

IT is evident on the first inspection of this narrative, that the Evangelist is representing Christ's kindness towards the outward sufferings and diseases of afflicted men.—In reference to this matter then it must be that

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he

he understands and applies the words of the prophet; they are else foreign to his purpose.

I HAVE above shown, independently of the use made of them by St. Matthew, that such is the very sense which the prophet's argument requires. The application therefore is direct and proper, and we are happily not under the necessity of supposing, that what the Prophet wrote in one sense, the Apostle applied in another, or else rejecting the quotation altogether as interpolated by the ignorance of a transcriber: a wretched alternative, incautiously offered to our choice by a late eminent critic, in a work that for many years raised high expectations in the minds of all who were disposed and qualified to study the scriptures with scrupulous and critical attention.

HAVING shown what the sense of the Prophet and Evangelist is, and how perfectly they agree with each other, I come now to make some observations on the subject of which they treat.

WHILE

See Bp. Pearce's Comment on the Place.

WHILE the Jews were fondly looking for a sign from Heaven, for a sudden and visible display of splendor and power only; he who could have answered those expectations to the utmost, had it so pleased him, and have called the whole Host of Heaven, even legions of angels into his train; chose rather to exert his power in such manner as to manifest his goodness likewise, continually ministring relief to the pain and afflictions of the distressed. Such actions, at the same time that they were sufficient, considered as acts of omnipotence and accomplishment of prophetic oracles, to command the faith of mankind; considered as acts of benevolence, were calculated to engage our love and encourage our imitation. Lest, however, his precepts and example should fail of their proper influence on our conduct, our blessed Lord awakens our attention to this object, in a manner that must in some degree at least affect even the most obdurate. In that awful description which he hath given us of the great day of final retribution, it is of such acts as these more especially, that he declares the account will be taken; putting himself, who hath so loved us, in the place of the afflicted; and making their cause his own. “ Inasmuch as ye have done it to one
 “ of the least of these my brethren ye have done it un-

“ to me.”^k—Well, therefore, might it be said by the apostle, that “ Love is the fulfilling of the Law,”^l the sum and substance of that law which Christ hath given for the regulation of our affections and conduct.—The earliest fruit of the sin of our first parents, was malice in the breast of their offspring ; malice in the extreme. It became therefore the business of him who came to abolish the works of the devil, to quell in the first instance that detestable spirit, by which he had from the beginning reigned in our hearts, to the utter destruction of the peace and happiness of the world. Of this great end of his mission he warned his disciples with a severe reproof, when they would have called down fire from Heaven on the inhospitable town.^m And when the followers of John were sent by their master to receive full conviction that Jesus was the very Christ—he only referred them to those beneficent works which he had just wrought before their eyes ;ⁿ leaving it with themselves to conclude from thence both the certainty of his pretensions, and the nature of his religion.

It

^k Matt. xxv. 40.

^l Rom. xiii. 10.

^m Luke ix. 55, 56.

ⁿ Matt. xi. 2—6.

It is observable on this topic, that the great Author of our religion and hopes, himself practised in the feeling of our infirmities, ever represents the common afflictions of our life, such as they are, as positively evils in themselves; to be born with patience and submission in our own persons, and regarded with pity in others. To pretend to make light of them, and steel our hearts against all sense of them by philosophical theories and mechanical courage, is pride and folly to the uttermost, presuming on powers which we cannot command; and if we could, they would be ill employed to such a purpose. The afflictions we endure, whether of body or mind, are the effects of sin; and therefore they are and must be evils. The removal of them by the gracious hand of God himself, is so far a forgiveness of sins here; and a token of that final forgiveness through the blood of Christ which alone can secure to us eternal happiness. Thus to him it was all one to say to the impotent man, "thy sins are forgiven," and to say, "take up thy bed and walk."

In reviewing the Gospel History, we cannot but remark, that the afflictions to which the compassion and power

• Matt. ix. 5, 6.

power of Christ were chiefly directed, were such as arose from bodily disease and pain. These were obvious and unequivocal; depriving men not only of the comforts and enjoyments of life, but frequently too of the necessary means of existence. To these, in one shape or other, we are all liable. Many of them admit of alleviation, even by human means. The wit and industry of man hath, from the earliest time, been ransacking the several productions of the natural world; developing their most hidden properties, and combining them in various forms, in order to obtain remedies for those distempers which harass our mortal frame, and continually threaten its dissolution.—This knowledge, both in its attainment and exercise, requires no ordinary talents, and is attended with heavy charge. The advantages thence arising would in consequence be confined solely to the affluent; while the poor labourer, and perhaps a numerous family, whose support was depending on his vigour and activity, must perish under the accumulated misery of disease and want.——To extend these advantages to such persons, and furnish them at the same time with that care and attendance, and those indulgencies which are as necessary as medicine itself to the recovery of health, is the object aimed at by institutions of the kind

kind which now calls for our consideration. A more heavenly work cannot be conceived. It is at once gratifying the best propensities of our nature, obeying the precepts, and, in the best manner we are able, imitating the conduct of the great Author of every good we enjoy or hope for; who took our nature upon him not only to make atonement by his death for our sins, but in his life to give us an example that we might walk in his steps; manifesting both in word and deed, that the love of God and love of man are inseparably united, mutually supporting, and depending on each other.

WHAT I have already stated is, I trust, sufficient to convince every one of you how directly these institutions fall in with the genuine spirit of our holy religion.—Having done that, it were in this assembly superfluous to advert to the political advantages accruing from them. We are all ready to acknowledge that there is nothing in the spirit and precepts of the Gospel, but what properly pursued must tend to promote the happiness and welfare of every state upon earth.—Would to God the experiment were more universally made!—In this instance we have experience enough. Your own state of the thousands restored to the public, in the course of

but

but a few years, is of itself sufficient proof.* The prosperity of communities is not to be estimated from extent of territory, or the abundance of what is commonly called riches; but from the number of its useful and industrious inhabitants: they and they alone constitute the true riches, and prosperity, and power of a state. The unparalleled success that hath attended this establishment, is owing principally to the unremitted care constantly employed in superintending and conducting the whole business; which hath hardly been equalled, certainly not exceeded in any institution of the kind. We are much indebted to the abilities and disinterested attendance of the Gentlemen of the Faculty. I may say the same of the Clergy in their department, in consequence of which our charitable purpose is made to convey health and comfort to the souls as well as bodies of our afflicted brethren.

THE great and laudable exertions which gave rise to this foundation, are still necessary, equally necessary to its future support and continuance. I am led to this remark

* The whole number of patients cured and relieved at this Hospital from the first opening of it in 1772, to the 17th of July, 1782, just ten years, amounts to 4520.

mark from the face of your printed accounts; where it appears that the expenditure, notwithstanding the most frugal œconomy, now exceeds the actual receipt, and is apace consuming that balance which the Treasurer hath hitherto held in his hands. It appears likewise that the sum received by contribution in the last year, of which an account hath been made public, was far less than on any preceding year. I do not mention this by way of reproach, where so much praise is due; but purely for your information; that you may know in what degree your bounty is still wanted: nothing doubting that the same Christian spirit now rules in your hearts, and will bring forth its proper fruit; not only supplying the necessities of the sick and needy; but like the ministration of the saints of old, “abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God.”

DISCOUNTS ON GREAT

	<i>l.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
The balance of cash in July, 1781, was	661	19	2 $\frac{1}{2}$
in July, 1782, —	370	10	1 $\frac{1}{2}$

* The receipts, by contribution, in the last four years are as follows,

	l.	s.	d.
From 1778 to 1779 —	1114	2	0
From 1779 to 1780 —	1031	2	0
From 1780 to 1781 —	1107	5	1 $\frac{1}{4}$
From 1781 to 1782 —	1005	17	0

The lowest of the six preceding years amounts to 1247l. 16s.

2 Cor. ix. 12.

GREAT as the benefits are already derived from this foundation, it is possible, perhaps, they may be carried still farther. It is the nature of true Christian charity ever to advance, continually acquiring strength in its progress. Instead, therefore, of letting this good work dwindle in our hands; we should consider if it be not in our power to bring it to a greater degree of perfection. And for this purpose, let us implore the blessing of God on our hearts, and on our substance, that we may not employ that in folly and extravagance which might be allotted to the benefit of mankind, to the furtherance of Christian piety, and to the honour of God's name and service. So shall we be "good stewards of the manifold grace of God:" "laying up in store for ourselves a good foundation against the time to come;" ready to account cheerfully with our master; and waiting with humble confidence for that gracious sentence, "Well done good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord."*

* 1 Pet. iv. 10.

* 1 Tim. vi. 99.

* Matt. xxv. 21.

